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Measure of This Space

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Nothing would be more erroneous than to appraise the mass of the country according to our metric system. The real unit, which is the man's very same measure, is the duration of the effort of the agile walker or the notable perched on a mule at a lively trot. Moreover, it would be necessary that this duration be appraisable quantitatively. It is not, of course, in hours and minutes. At the very most, the interval between prayers, themselves marked by the positions of the sun, could serve as a standard. But one hardly prays. To tell the truth, it is even looser measurements: morning, noon, evening, qabah', zizwal, iqfirar, which would be the most sympathetic to the heart. But we shall not repeat here the reflections of Lucien Febvre on the "temps flottant" /fluctuating time/, the "temps dormant" /dormant time/ of societies of "médiéval" type (1).

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1. L. Febvre, Le problème de l'incroyance au XVI^e siècle /The problem of unbelief in the sixteenth century/, 1942, pp. 426 to 434, and G. Friedmann, "L'homme et le milieu naturel /Man and the natural milieu/", Ann. hist. soc., 1945, II, pp. 109 sq.

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Moreover, it being a question of mechanical time, I mean very precisely time serving to measure or to divide up an effort very precise and of constant duration, it is indeed hours that we shall avail ourselves of in order to measure Seksawa space, just as the officers of the penetration did.

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Let us disregard the immense confines which, beyond the villages, on the Tichka side, as on that of the Ras Mulay Ali, extend much farther still. Seksawa life, the life of the valley bottom, which is the municipal life, the dense life with full potential, is measured by /14/ very slight durations. We shall see, in fact: the intercalary spaces correspond to other rhythms, entablatures separating the valleys, rounded summits, and, with

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example, it must be confessed that an analysis preoccupied above all with morphology, like ours, quite systematically omits the "magic" aspect of Maghrebi affairs. But, on the one hand, the acceptance of Laoust is much broader, and means all at the same time magic in the strict sense, religion, and folklore. On the other hand, if many of the facts that it embraces are only guilty of having been interpreted without a statistical context, they nonetheless exist. That is already a great deal. Would to God that the collection had been increased since Westermarck and E. Laoust with the same élan that animated these great explorers! Subsequent developments that will be devoted to the religious and juridical structures of the Seksawa will close up these distinctions. But here and now, and although, once again, the discussion of the Frazer thesis applied to Maghrebi phenomena is not our purpose, it is necessary to dispose of it, as evocative (or creative) of a partial, but incontestable verity of atmosphere, as it assuredly merits in any description of rural life.

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In all of North Africa, the "tasks and the days" are ordered according to a double division of the year into months of the Julian calendar, with curiously Latin names, and into "mansions," manâzil, of thirteen days each, based on astrology (1).

1. This is in any case an extremely ancient genre in the Mussulman Occident. Cf. H. -P. -J. Renaud, Le calendrier d'Ibn al-Banna' de Marrakech (1256-1321), 1948, moreover on a Cordova prototype and, it seems, without reference /this footnote is continued on the next page in the original source/ to the Maghreb. Cf. also Joly, Arch. mar., III, 1905, pp. 300 sq. Léon, Description de l'Afrique, Schefer, t. I, pp. 112 sq.

The generality of this belief in the manâzil is attested by the fact that a small treatise devoted to them by a man of letters from Marrakech, Ibn Al-Muwaqqit, Natijat al-'umr,

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/footnote 1 continued/ Egyptian edition, 1930, a breviary of erudite centos and good-woman advice, with numerous agricultural references, is sold throughout North Africa, and, it is said, even in Egypt. It would be interesting to know if the "mahone calendar" used in Algeria by sailors and peasants has any link with this Mussulman folklore.

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Finally, beside /131/ the old rural celebrations, like the "New Year," yenneyr, or "Candlemas," lançra, the Mussulman fasti, following the lunar year and hence disconnected from the first two rhythms, also introduce their holiday or cease-work periods. Whence a complex system. The study that might be made of it for a given milieu would be suggestive. But it would rather come under the jurisdiction of folklore. At first sight, it is the similitudes with the rest of the Maghreb, even Arab, rather than peculiarities that would constitute the principal problem here (1).

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1. We shall find at various times the same Maghrebi community, subjacent, in a way, to regional developments. To speak like A. Varagnac, the "archéocivilisation" of North Africa is one. From that perhaps comes the fact that ethnology is so little efficacious in accounting for the veritable characteristics of the different regions. The originality is not in the "foundation," it is in the treatments that it has undergone, that is to say, in the history.

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Two investigations will be detached from it as better adapted to the character of our work: first, on the unfolding of the agricultural campaign; then on the functions devolving, in the bosom of the group, on such and such subgroups.

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/footnote 1 continued/ express an exigency of internal equilibrium. But let us take this isolated rapprochement only for what it would be: merely the bait for more extended controls. (Cf. Archives of the Sénatus Consulte a Paris.)

128 These cross-checkings /225/ thus remain to be done. Only they will be able to inform or confirm, and consequently to endow with generality or not, the structural law that it is believed has been uncovered here.

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The "Parcellary Orchestration" (1)

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1. This expression is taken up again, while apologizing for its paradoxical aspect, from the article of 1948, where we set forth our first verifications.

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Let us return to the Seksawa of the high valleys.

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Their whole life is marked by a very precise division bearing on three orders of facts. The ground is divided into individualized quarters. Time is scanned by the succession of "turns" organized for irrigation, and the latter is not only an essential economic base, but a collective symbol, fixing the most vehement aspirations of these rural people. The group is divided into ikhs-s, themselves distributed in conjugal families, but preserving a role, or rather assuming attributions. There prevails among these three orders of things an exact correspondence.

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Easily decipherable in the present state, and despite degradations and mutations, it inspires and maintains the deportment of the montagnard, for whom it is at the same time an inveterate organization, guarantee of persistence, and ideal of legitimacy. The local land law in this part of the Atlas has no aim other than